

Region supports foodland

The provincial government's recently-adopted Food Land Guidelines have won the support of three-quarters of the agriculture-oriented groups in Halton and neighboring region which submitted comments to Queen's Park, the regional planning committee was told last week.

Ministry of agriculture and food field officer Harold Fleming told the committee last Tuesday that 66 of the 88 organizations which responded to the government's invitation to comment on the newly-revised policy statement were generally favorable to its content and intent. Of the remainder, he said, criticisms were divided almost equally between those groups which feel the guidelines "go too far" and those which feel they do not go far enough.

OTHER DOCUMENTS
Mr. Fleming was on hand at the committee meeting to express his willingness to meet with regional planning officials and help them incorporate aspects of the guidelines into Halton's official plan and other planning documents.

Mr. Fleming explained that the guidelines, which began with the province's Strategy for Ontario Farmland in 1976, were tabled as government policy in the legislature Dec. 11. Final revisions made recently were the result of "many comments" made since that time, according to agriculture minister William Newman, although "the basic principles of the guidelines remain unchanged."

Coun. Terry Mannell of Oakville asked Mr. Fleming whether the guidelines are more concerned with preserving Ontario's food lands or keeping land use designations flexible so that food lands can be rezoned for urban development as future needs dictate.

While the ministry acknowledges that urban sprawl must continue, the Mr. Fleming responded, it strives through the guidelines to set priorities by which lower class farmland will be the first to be redesignated for urban uses while at the same time higher class agricultural land will be preserved.

Regional chairman Jack Raftis, admitting that his question was "rhetorical", asked the ministry official to comment on a well-publicized remark by former Ontario New Democratic Party leader Stephen Lewis that the province's farm lands were "going out of production" at an enormous rate because of unchecked urban growth.

NO DOUBT
"There's no doubt that agricultural land is going out of production, but I don't think I should comment on the rate," Mr. Fleming said.

"A lot of us probably believe that the province is opting out with these guidelines and turning the whole problem over to the municipalities, like they did with the Niagara Escarpment Commission," Committee chairman Roy Booth of Halton Hills told Mr. Fleming.

The municipalities and province may be able to work together to solve problems related to farmland use, he commented.

"Let's hope our proposed utopia comes true."

Waterloo U considers local courses

The University of Waterloo reports considerable public interest in a survey into the feasibility of offering university courses next fall in the Halton Hills region.

According to Stephen A. Jones, external affairs officer, Faculty of Arts, 250 questionnaires have been completed.

"We hope to offer courses by September," he said. If offered, the courses could be attended for degree credit (students would pay a fee and get a credit towards a university degree if they successfully complete a course) or simply as series of free public lectures. Fees are waived in any event for persons over 60.

A typical arrangement is for a course to meet once a week, in the evening, for approximately two-and-a-half to three hours. Mr. Jones thinks the most likely arrangement would be to offer courses from September through to mid-December; then pass over the "winter" period because of possible weather problems and run from March to mid-June. Successful completion of a three-and-a-half month course would result in one-half credit towards a degree.

Further details are available from the libraries which have been co-operating with UW in the survey: Georgetown (877-2681) and Acton (853-0301).

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